

Washington State's Statewide Interdisciplinary Program

How it has Improved Parent Representation and Outcomes

Learning Objectives

- 1. Understand the framework for a high quality interdisciplinary parent representation program and how the components fit together.**
- 2. Review recent literature on whether interdisciplinary programs improve parent representation.**

How Do We Build a High Quality Parent Representation Program?



Foundation- Caseload Standard

80 cases per attorney. Rest of Standards are predicated on this one.

Framing-Client Communication

Frequent and meaningful contact which allows the attorney to effectively advocate for client and the client to be heard.

Roof-Oversight and Support

Ensuring the contractors are meeting the standards and providing technical support.

Windows-Advocacy for Services

Empowering client participation in creating an individually tailored case plan that meets the unique needs of the client with an emphasis on early client engagement.

Walls-Investigation and Client Support

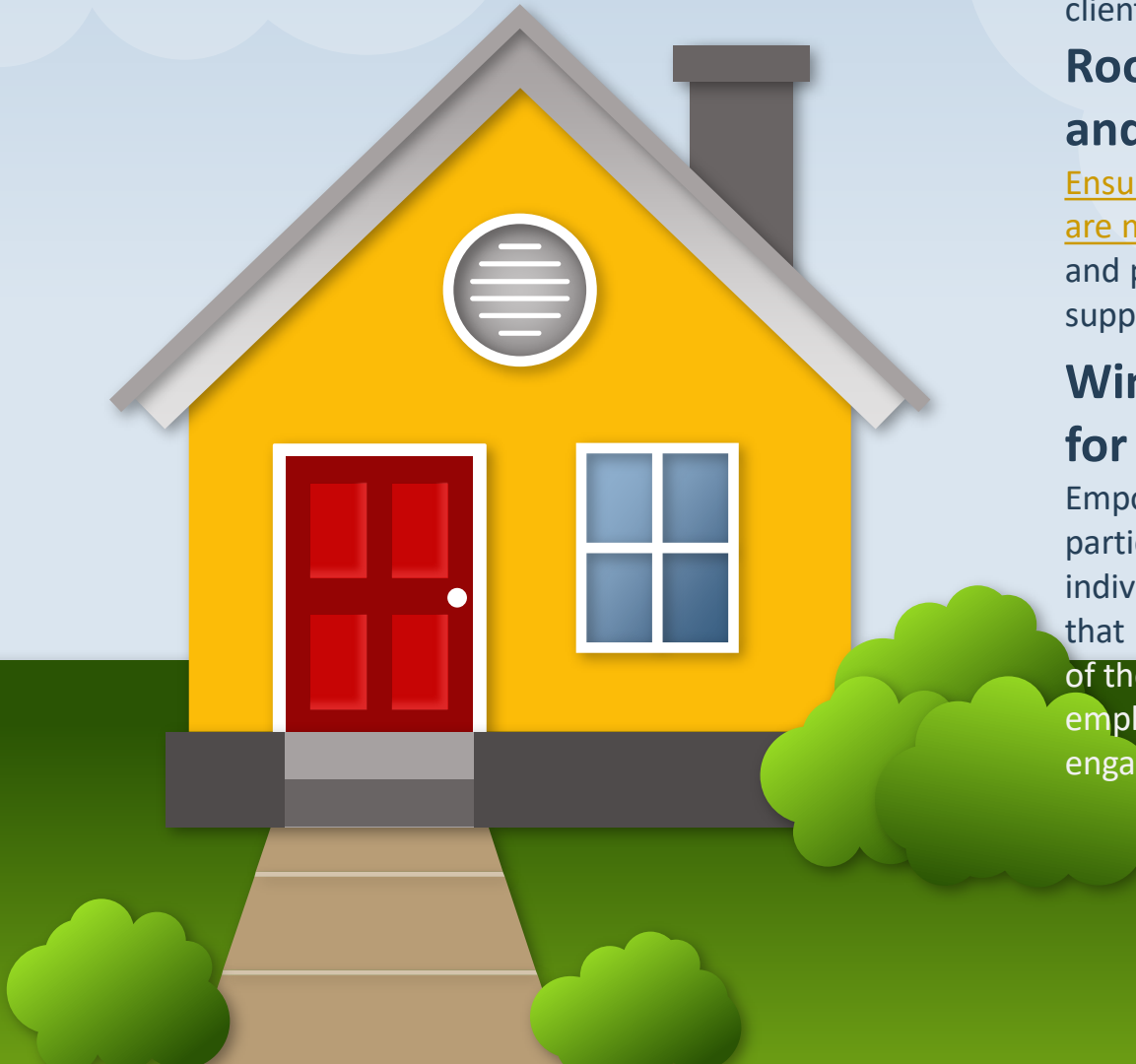
Independent investigation, reviewing discovery, using expert services, OPD social service specialists, and parent allies.

Doors-Advocacy for Visitation

Ensuring that visitation meets the developmental needs of the child, and protecting the right of the family to be together.

Landscaping- Communication with Others

Collaborating where possible with other stakeholders consistent with the clients goals and in a professional manner.



Caseload Standards Make a Difference

- 80 cases counted by the client
- Lack of Caseload standards leads to “Courthouse Steps” representation
- Without a caseload standard, other standards are almost impossible to implement

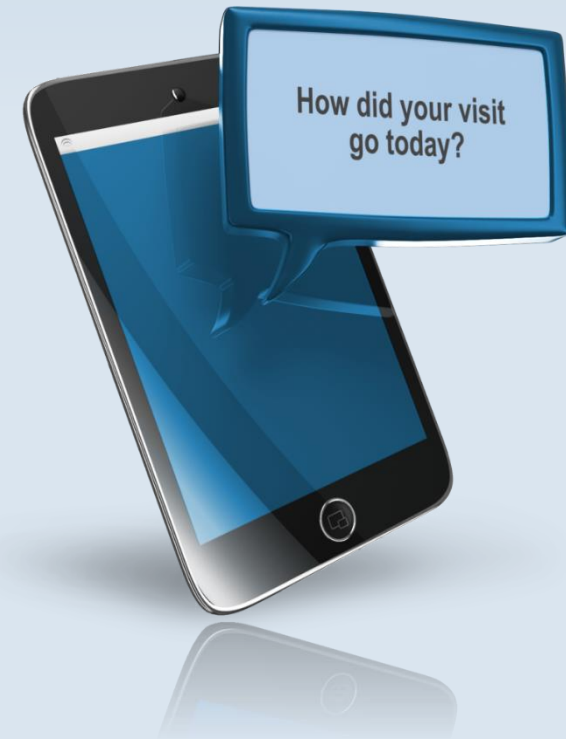


Enhanced Client Communication Builds Trust

About 30% of attorneys time spent communicating with clients

- Client Directed Representation
- Tailored to meet the needs of the specific client
- Office or other private space
- Timely
- Allows clients to be heard
- Trauma responsive
- Prepares client for court and staffings

Almost all attorneys have incorporated texting in their communication plan



Impact on Attorney Practice

- Know more about your client which helps build better relationships between client and social worker
- Develop meaningful relationships with clients
- Give good advice including best interest of child advice
- Client more likely to listen to advice

Expert Service Use

- In 2011 the top 4 used experts were:

-Psychological Evaluations	27%
-Expert Testimony	11%
-Polygraph	10%
-Forensic Social Worker	7%

In 2019, the top 4 were:

-Forensic Social Worker	20%
-Medical Forensic Review	20%
-Psychological Evaluations	16%
-Home Study	9%

OPD Social Worker

- Social Worker=Social Service Specialist
- Same qualifications as Children's Administration
- Case Support for parent
- Translator of social work principles for attorneys
- Translator of legal and social work principles for the parent
- Helps parent engage
- Limited Resource
- Empower the parent to take charge of their service plan
- Impact

Parent for Parent

- Parents with experience in child welfare system assist in educating parents currently in the system and helping them more fully engage
- Uniquely situated to give hope to parents in the system
- Helps with client engagement and empowerment.

Oversight by OPD

- Training
- Technical assistance
- Monitoring of caseloads
- Monitoring of hours spent on cases
- Monitoring of client communication hours
- Complaint process
- Attorney reviews and court observations

Does it work?

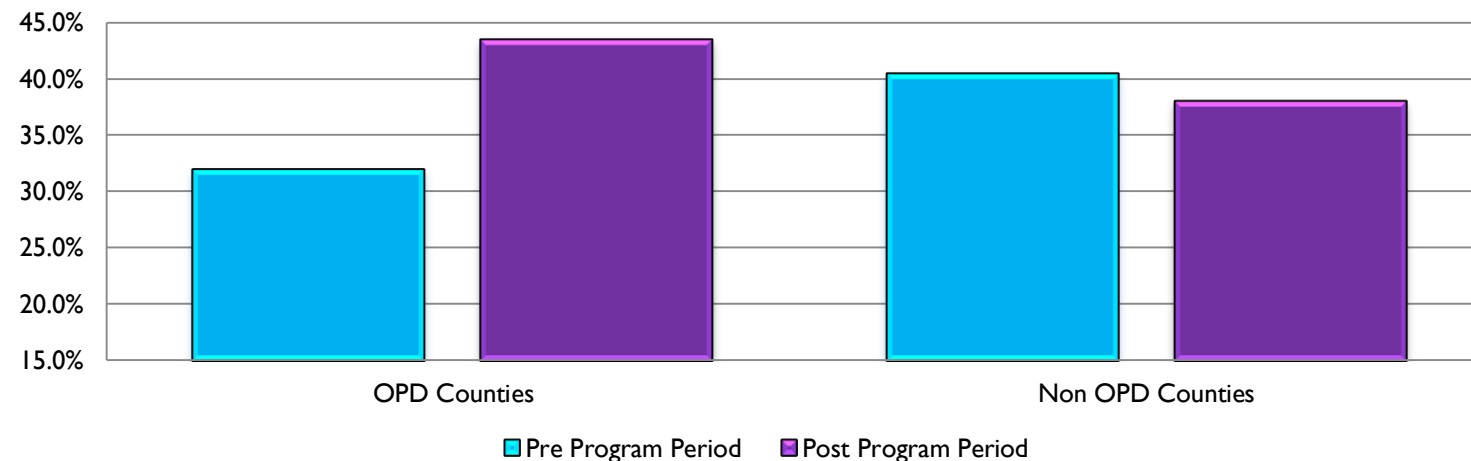
- [OPD Studies](#)
- New York Study
 - Children and Youth Services Review 102 (2019) 42-55
 - Builds off of Washington study
 - Children go home 118 days sooner



Evaluations and Data

2010 and 2011 OPD and Washington State
Center for Court Research Data

OPD Program Counties Improved Reunification Rates While Non Program Counties Did Not





Washington's Parents Representation Program Helping Children in Child Welfare System Reach Permanency

KEY MESSAGES

- The Parents Representation Program is helpful in moving children from the child welfare system to permanent homes.
- The Parents Representation Program cuts the time it takes for children to reach permanency:*

Reunifications occur
1 MONTH sooner**

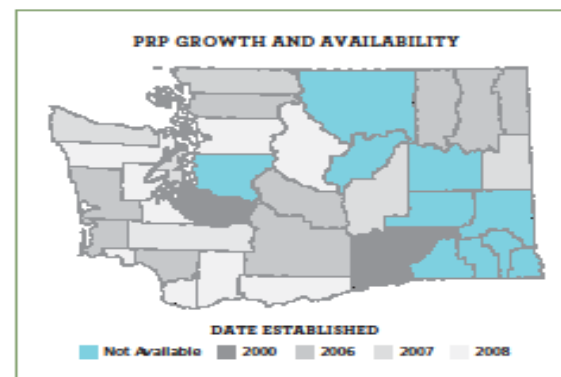
Adoptions and Guardianships
occur **1 YEAR** sooner**

*Based on a projection of statewide implementation on a cohort of children entering care in 2001 **Approximations

Summary

Legal representation in juvenile court has been recognized by most states as an essential protection for parents when children have been removed from their custody. A 1999 study called into question whether parents in Washington were receiving adequate legal representation in processes that have significant consequences for parents and children.¹ The Parents Representation Program (PRP) was developed by the Washington State Office of Public Defense (OPD) and the Washington State Legislature to enhance the quality of defense representation for parents in dependency and termination hearings. The program aims to reduce the number of continuances requested by attorneys, limit caseloads (no more than 80 cases per attorney) and supports their work by ensuring attorneys have reasonable time to prepare cases and work with clients. The program provides social workers, expert resources, periodic trainings, and oversight through OPD. Piloted initially in three counties in 2000, the program has now expanded to 25 counties across the state. See Map.

¹ Washington State Office of Public Defense (1999). *Costs of Defense and Children's Representation in Dependency and Termination Cases*. Olympia, WA: Author.



In 2010, Partners for Our Children at the University of Washington conducted a study on the impact of PRP, looking at the program's influence on the speed with which children are reunified, adopted or enter guardianships.²

² To date, the PRP is the only program of parental representation in juvenile dependency proceedings known by the authors to have been the subject of evaluation research.

